



Made with QGIS software 4.14.4 and designed by Megan Sheehan August 6, 2016.

Victory Acres: A Neighborhood Struggling to Endure

HST 580 Final Group Project

An Historical GIS investigation into the struggles of the community of Victory Acres in Tempe, Arizona. Project completed by Nancy Rushing, Megan Sheehan, Kristopher Fedorak, Josh Blackmon, Jonathan Lipford, Kaitlin Dailey, Zsuzsa Szabo, William Hedrick, and Brooks Waybright.

Blog address: <http://victoryacresproject.weebly.com/>

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Executive Report

Victory Acres is a community that has changed drastically since 1945, a fact that is easily demonstrated using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to compare data from various years. Residents of the San Pablo Barrio were displaced, with most ending up in Victory Acres, a new community created from farmland and with humble beginnings. As the city of Tempe grew, and residents expanded their homes, Victory Acres faced many different projects. These included Arizona State University expansion, a major freeway, and the Valley Metro Light Rail transportation system. All of these projects reshaped the land and caused the original community to struggle. Community members saw the projects as a burden since they created a sense of isolation for the kids of the neighborhood, and because the neighborhood lacked recreational facilities for families, friends and kids to get together. This forced them to congregate outside of their community. The decline that Victory Acres experienced is not uncommon. With the passage of time, properties naturally diminish in value, which is referred to as the Neighborhood Life-Cycle. Low income housing, and having to visit other areas for recreation, caused many of the original residents to leave Victory Acres. Urban development, a loss in the sense of community, and low wages in the area have been the cause for most of the changes in the area.

Most sources for this project were local. GIS data was organized and analyzed using QGIS version 2.14.4 and Google Earth. Historic aerial photography for the study area was georeferenced using common features as points of reference on both the historic aerial and other georeferenced layers such as a modern satellite base map, roadways, houses, waterways and bridges. Census data and property values were also used to accomplish this project.

Introduction

Victory Acres was a post-war neighborhood that has declined significantly since its inception in the 1945. Many of the residents of the San Pablo Barrio were told to move out or face eminent domain for the expansion of Arizona State University. The city feared reprisals from the residents, many of whom fought in World War II, so former farm land was allotted for a new barrio to form called “Victory Acres” or “La Vic.”

Since this time, the neighborhood has gone through several major declines. The property values in the neighborhood have significantly declined, neighborhood income has declined, and also their sense of community. There are numerous reasons for this and will be discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

The people of this neighborhood have experienced many different unfortunate circumstances. This report will discuss these circumstances through a series of literature reviews, different sources, methods with maps, and historical narrative. Through these sources, details about how the people moved from San Pablo to Victory Acres, the eminent domain of the highway, and the reasons people moved away. Although there are some houses and people still left in this area, people, for the most part, have moved away. By today’s standards, there really isn’t a barrio there anymore. The reasons for this are many and range from displacement, to eminent domain, to segregation and more. The community, noted as one of the oldest neighborhoods in Tempe, has seen better days.



Fig. 1

A Historical Narrative of *Barrio la Victoria* (Victory Acres)

Beginnings

In the late 1800s a section of Tempe, Arizona was settled by Mexican immigrants. That area was known as *San Pablo*, and it became the main barrio of Tempe for the next few decades. It was a community of families until the late 1950s, when Arizona State University decided to expand.[1] At this point in history Arizona State University (ASU) aimed to build more dormitories for their main campus. As a result, San Pablo, a barrio that had “survived the Great Depression and two World Wars” was lost, and its citizens were relocated to other areas of Tempe.[2] One of the main areas of relocation was known as Victory Acres—or *Barrio la Victoria* to its residents.

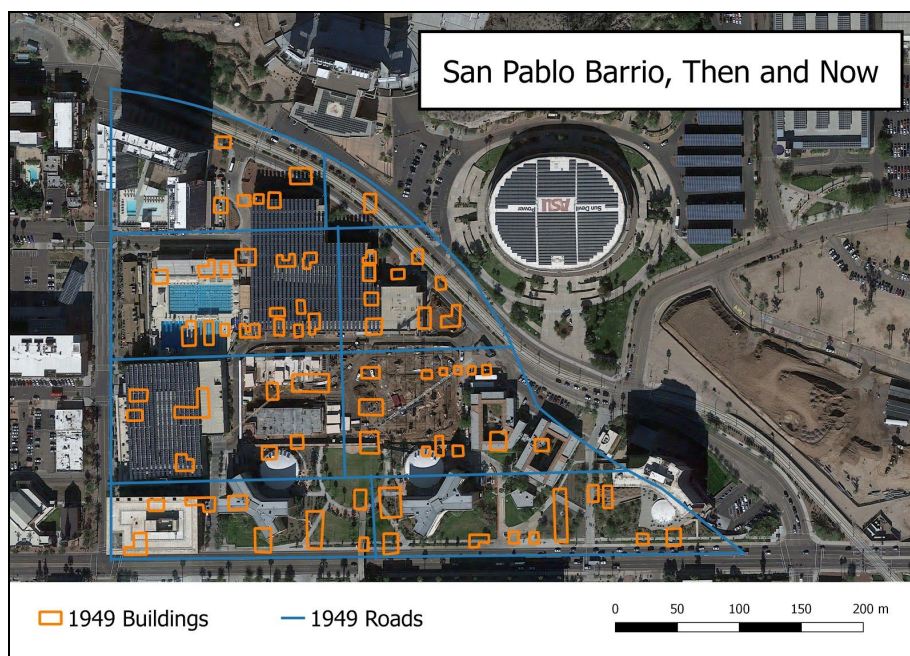


Fig 1.2 Map showing changes in San Pablo between 1949 and now. Locations of structures and roads in 1949 San Pablo Barrio are superimposed on a current map of the area. San Pablo Barrio was razed to facilitate the expansion of Arizona State University. The majority of the displaced residents moved to the neighborhood of Victory Acres and created a new community there.

*Sources: Google Earth, Historical Aerials shared by Maricopa County
Made using QGIS 2.14.3 by Nancy Rushing, August 5, 2016.*

Victory Acres has survived to the present day, although much of its look and atmosphere has changed in the past seven decades. The boundaries of this neighborhood run north to south from University to Apache, and east to west from Price to Evergreen, although there is a variety of information that has different boundaries listed, such as further south to Broadway, and east towards Dobson. The differences may point to the changes in the neighborhood over time, as modernization occurred.

Families in the neighborhood have “watched the area change from rural farmland to urban landscape.”[3] *La Victoria* began as a farming community when land was purchased by George and Mary Tibshraney in the early 1940s. By the mid-1940s they began subdividing their 80 acres of farmland and selling it off. One section of that farmland was named “Victory” Acres as a result of World War II and the winning attitude of Americans at the time. Many Mexican immigrants were coming to the area at this time in Arizona history because of the job opportunities, especially in agriculture. When being forced to relocate from San Pablo, Victory Acres—and its agricultural possibilities—was an attractive, and affordable, option.[4]



Fig. 1.3

This community had humble beginnings, as “the first people in Victory Acres often lived in tents, or small, humble, adobe and wood homes. Eventually they expanded their homes as families grew, and later rebuilt their homes, especially with Tempe’s participation in neighborhood redevelopment in the mid-1970s and early 1980s.”[5] The city of Tempe eventually paved the

dirt streets and improved the utilities of the community, creating a more livable neighborhood.[6] They were a tight knit community, along with the nearby Escalante neighborhood, shopping in a neighborhood market, going to church in the area—most were Catholics—and sending their children to local schools not far from the barrio.



Fig. 1.4 Santa Margarita Church

Changing Communities

Urban growth has played a major role in the changes to this neighborhood in the decades since its initial development. Aside from ASU expanding their campus over the years, a major freeway has been built running through Victory Acres, as well as the Valley Metro Light Rail transportation system that began service in 2009. One of the first major construction projects was the Loop 101 Freeway running through the west of the neighborhoods. According to an article in the *East Valley Tribune*, this freeway system—which began in 1988—was built through the center of the neighborhood, cutting it in half.[7] Nearly two decades later came the Valley Metro Light Rail system, with a stop on the western boundary of Victory Acres.

The community does not seem to profit from these urban developments, but rather, community members see them as a burden. Ramon Bello, a citizen of Victory Acres since the 1950s. He feels like the Price Freeway—the Loop 101—isolated the kids of the neighborhood. That, and the fact that the neighborhood lacks any city recreational facility for families, friends

and kids to get together forces them to congregate outside in the streets of their community,



Fig. 1.5 Esquer Park

which has caused the Tempe police to mistake their get-togethers as “gangs.” In fact, the neighborhood only has one small park within its boundaries.[8]

Present Day

Much of Victory Acres is now homes for its residents. The rural farming community that it once was has disappeared over the decades, leaving only

memories in the minds of the residents who have continued to live in the area. Although urban development has been the cause for most of the changes in the area, very few businesses actually exist in Victory Acres. There are a few located along its northern boundary at University Drive, with a church near the center, but most of the buildings that remain are the houses of the people who call Victory Acres “home”.

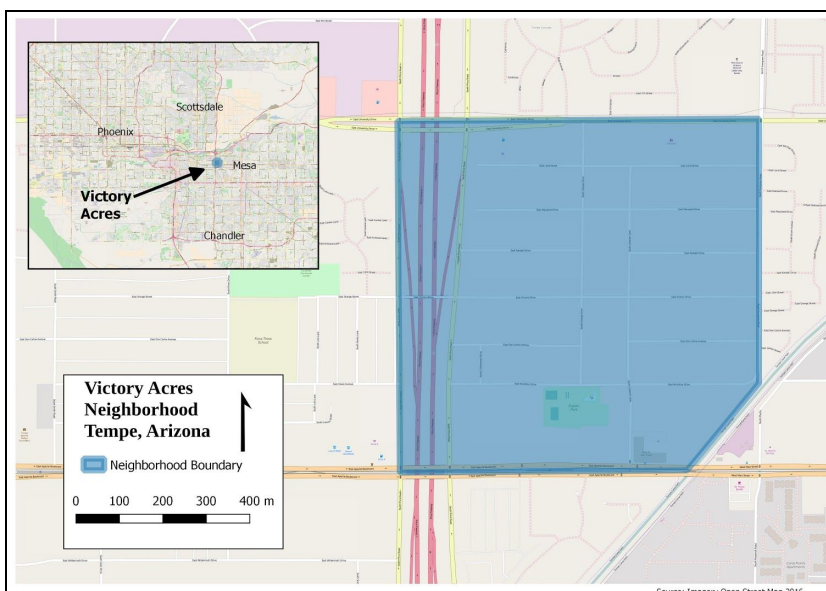


Fig. 1.6 General location map for Victory Acres within Tempe, Arizona.

Literature Review - Why Do Neighborhoods Decline?

The decline that Victory Acres has experienced is not uncommon. Communities go through many changes, mostly negative, but they cannot be avoided. With the passage of time, the once vibrant properties of Victory Acres naturally diminished in value. This occurrence, referred to as the Neighborhood Life-Cycle, was studied in Cincinnati by William A. Schwab. As Schwab researched, he found that the “relationship between the socioeconomic status of occupants and housing age is a crucial one.”[9] As time passes, a home’s increased age “reduces the benefits produced by a given dwelling unit” and “necessarily leads to lower income occupancy. Since all units in a neighborhood age together, the population of the neighborhood will vacate” for a neighborhood with newer units.[10] People who can afford to do so will leave behind the deteriorating and diminishing homes for new, lower income residents to move into. This leads to further decline in the neighborhood’s overall income and value.

While not ideal, a community can survive this lowered level of socioeconomic activity as long as it is “held together by common values, mutual dependence, affection, and respect, much like an extended family.”[11] The sense of community that close-knit neighborhoods have, however, is also endangered by people leaving. Nancy Perry found this to be true as she researched East Arlington, Virginia, a neighborhood with a story very similar to that of Victory Acres’.

Quite often, residents have no choice but to leave. Just as Victory Acres was originally populated by a minority group that had been moved from San Pablo through eminent domain, East Arlington was made up largely of people who had been made to leave Freedmen’s Village



Fig. 1.7 Map showing the changes in Victory Acres in the 1980s by comparing the presence or absence of buildings on aerial photography from 1979 and 1986. This map shows the impact of road construction as well as the growth of the neighborhood in the 1980s.

Source: 1979 and 1986 Historical Aerial Imagery from Maricopa County

(<http://gis.maricopa.gov/MapApp/GIO/AerialHistorical/>)

Made with QGIS 4.14.4 Map design by Josh Blackmon August 6, 2016.

for the creation of Arlington National Cemetery. And, again just like in Tempe, a portion of the East Arlington group found themselves forced to move to make way for roads. While the government was required to economically compensate the ousted residents of both Tempe and Arlington, “some losses are intangible, for example, the consequences and effects of the loss of sense of community on individuals living in the community.”[12] According to a Victory Acres’ historian, “Many of these barrios have been lost through Eminent Domain legal takeovers by city governments, by economic downturns, and other reasons. These barrios suffered the loss of their community life, family togetherness, and the support systems that nourished them through generations.”[13] Unfortunately, a sense of community is “an integral contributor to one’s commitment to a neighborhood and satisfaction with it.”[14] Victory Acres has found itself

caught up in a downward spiral that seems to feed itself. As homes aged, property values began to drop, and the highway was built, people moved away. As more people moved away, the sense of community lessened. As community becomes less important, people are less emotionally invested in the neighborhood, causing property values to further drop, thus continuing the cycle.

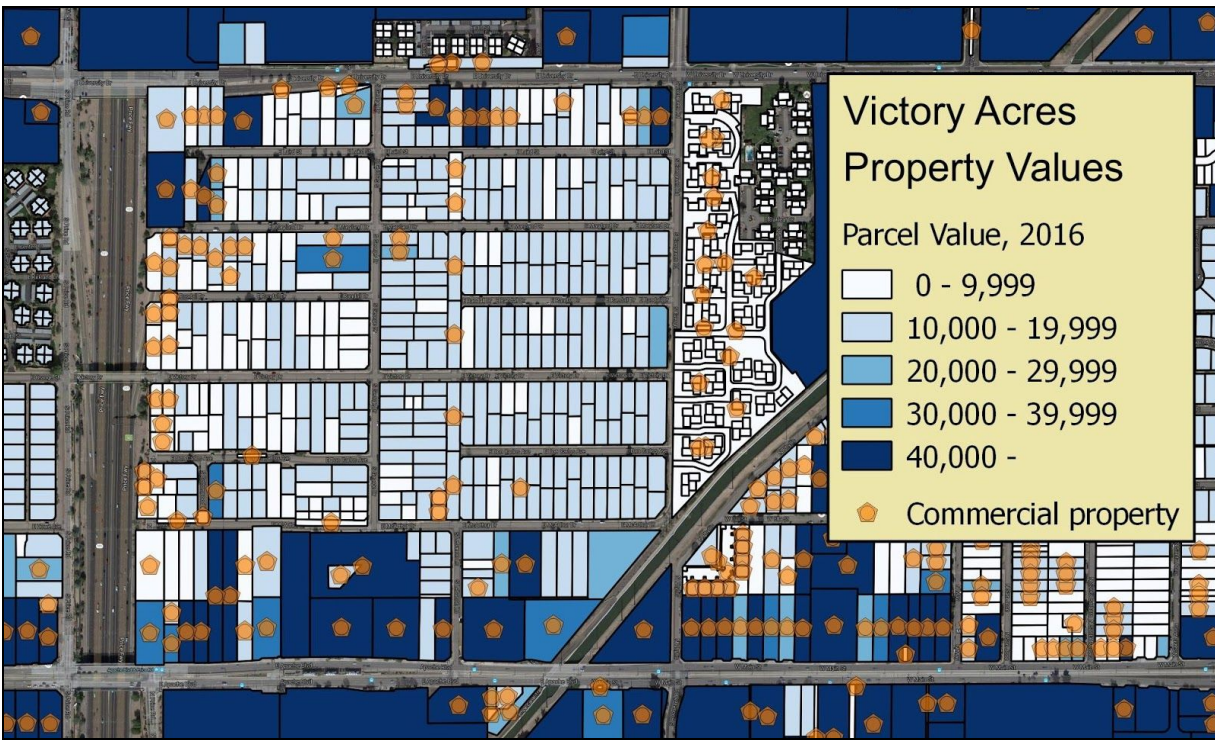


Fig. 1.8 Map showing total property values (land and improvements) in 2016, with commercial properties highlighted with star symbol (though it must be noted that Maricopa parcel data shows what is now highway (parts of the 101 and ramps) and S Lebanon Lane as 'commercial' land. Property values are quite low except along E Apache Boulevard, a major traffic artery where the new light rail line runs. Source: 2016 Parcel Data from Maricopa County accessed through Arizona State University Data Repository. Made with QGIS 4.14.4 Map design by Kris Fedorak August 7, 2016.

Sources

The sources used in this project were mainly local. This gives perspective to what those who lived in this community went through and gives a more inside effect to what happened to Victory Acres. The local newspapers and the local church were excellent sources to find out how the people of the neighborhood actually reacted to the decline of their community. Scholarly sources of journals were also used to show other areas that a similar community decline that occurred in Arlington, Virginia, and to discuss the natural progression of decline in neighborhoods. The combination of these sources led to the conclusion that old neighborhoods fade away as the population ages, homes become in disrepair, and become low rent housing. The younger generation generally wants new and better opportunities and this causes them to move out of the neighborhood.

The aerial maps of the area, from the neighborhood's inception in 1945 to the present, are also a great source. They show how the neighborhood progressed over time. The maps showed this neighborhood go from mainly farmland to a community to the decline. The maps over time have given rise to the conclusion that the neighborhood has been through much hardship involved with eminent domain and property decline.

Methods

GIS is a powerful tool that allows historians to organize and visualize spatial data. Information from a variety of source types can be standardized, given real-world coordinates for comparison, and shared easily between researchers. GIS also allows for generation and digitizing of historical information from sources allowing for comparisons and analysis between datasets. This organization and analysis provides historians with the ability to better visualize data, make observations, and answer questions about the past.

During this study many sources were consulted in order to provide both data and context for the Victory Acres Neighborhood. GIS data for this project were organized and analyzed using QGIS version 2.14.4 and Google Earth. Historic aerial photography for the study area was georeferenced by identifying common features as points of reference on both the historic aerial and other georeferenced layers such as a modern satellite base map, roadways, houses, waterways and bridges. Features represented on the historic aerials were then digitized to provide points of reference from various years for comparison of changes over time. In order to test the accuracy and validity of the data, a site visit was conducted and members of the community were interviewed. GIS data were generated and are presented in a series of maps describing the project area or showing the changes in Victory Acres over time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Victory Acres went through a cycle of decline as many communities do as they age. It began as farmland, grew into a subdivision of displaced people, and then into low rent housing as the community aged. This is the normal cycle of decline of communities. The older residents still seem proud to be from their neighborhood, but younger residents seem to move away. The story of decline is told through oral, map, literature, and several other types of history. The oral history from the residents tell of what happened to their neighborhood and the maps show the expansion of housing and the decline of property values. The maps also show the effect that transportation and city projects have had on the neighborhood. The literature review demonstrates how other communities have experienced the same problems with eminent domain and decline as Victory Acres. Many things have happened to Victory Acres since its inception in 1945 and it is now considered one of the oldest communities in the Tempe area.

Appendices

Site Visit Pictures

August 7, 2016



Fig. 2.1 Site visit August 7, 2016



Fig. 2.2 Susie's Mexican Cafe 2405 E University Dr.

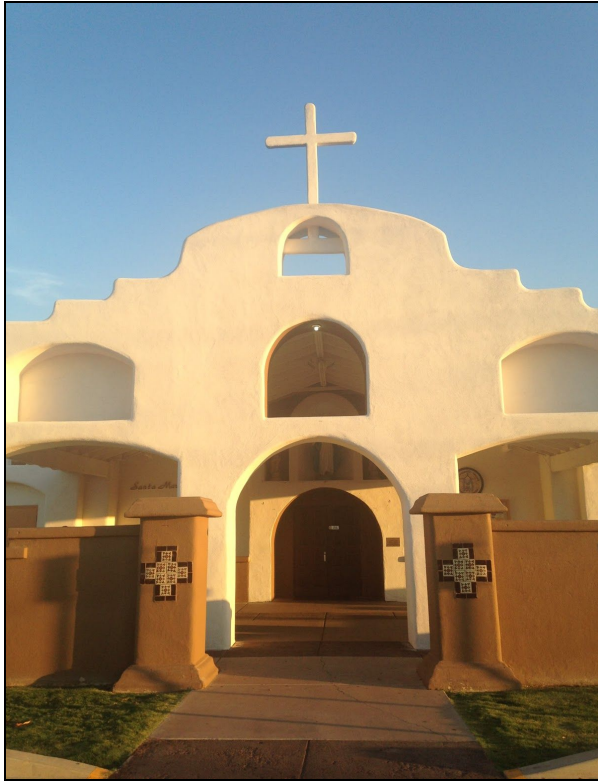


Fig. 2.3 Santa Margarita Church 2435 E McArthur Dr.



Fig. 2.4 Santa Margarita Church Plaque



Fig. 2.5 Interior of Santa Margarita Church



*Fig. 2.6 Watson's Flowers 2425 E Apache Blvd.
(across from Bill's Market)*



Fig. 2.7 Bill's Market 2422 E Apache Blvd.



Fig. 2.8 Empty Lot next to Bill's Market

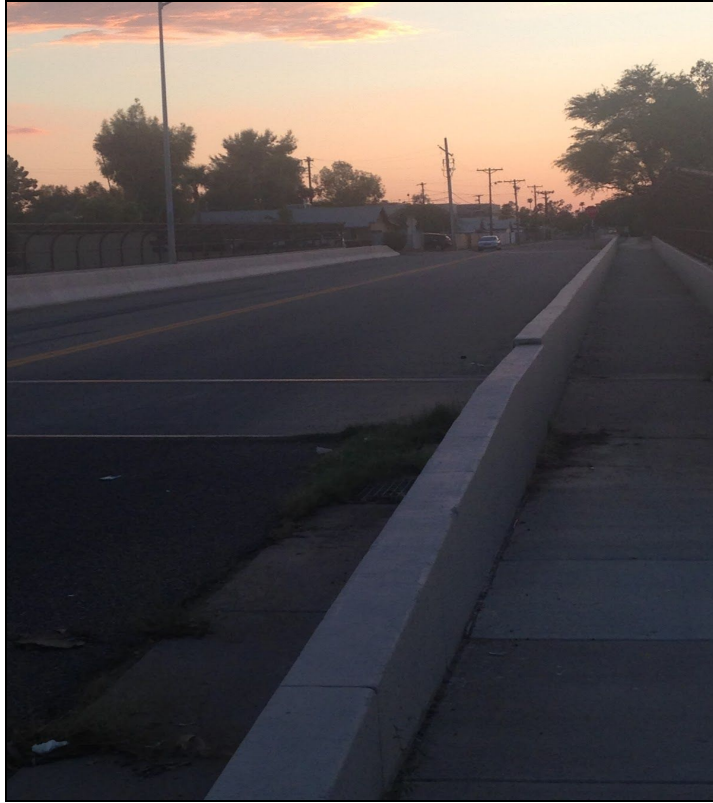


Fig. 2.9 Victory Lane (Bridge connecting to Escalante Community)

Maps

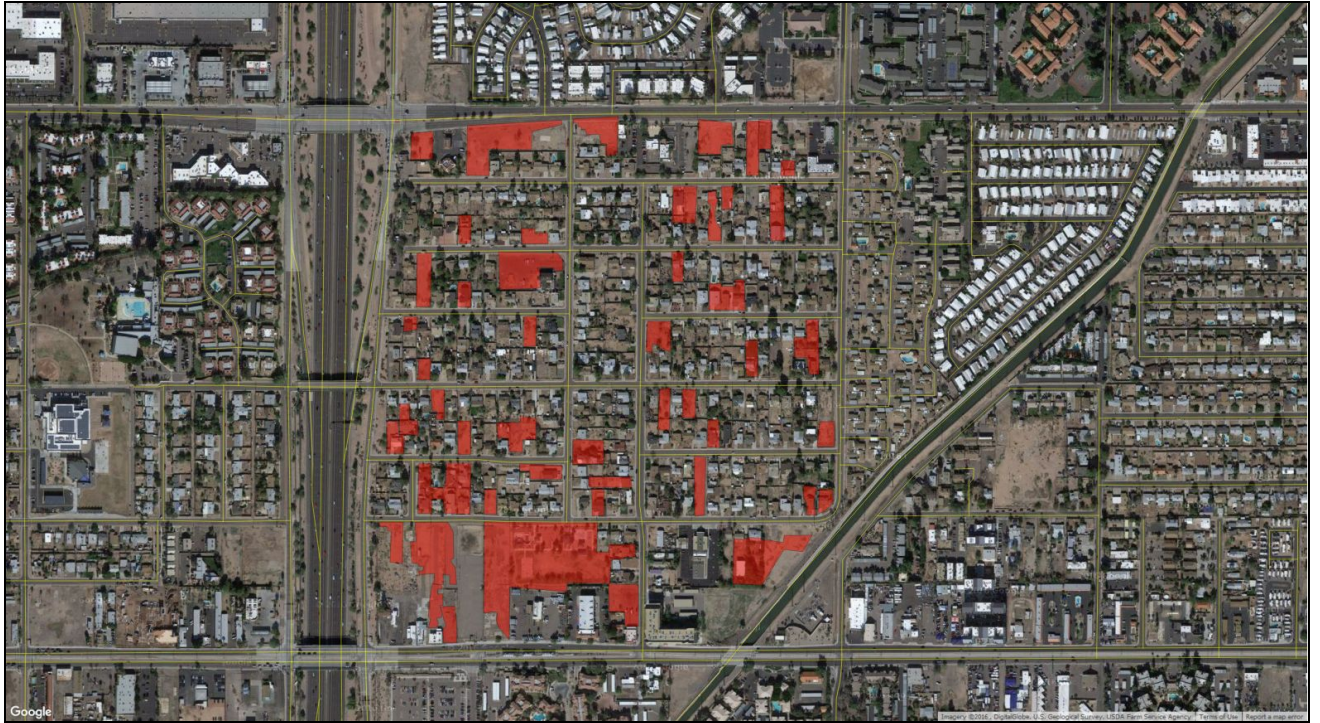


Fig. 3.1 Map showing the changes in Victory Acres in the late-1990s by comparing the empty lots (in red) from the late 1990s to the present-day satellite image of the neighborhood. This map illustrates the growth of the neighborhood in the 1990s. Source: December 1996-February 1997 Historical Aerial Imagery from Maricopa County (<http://gis.maricopa.gov/MapApp/GIO/AerialHistorical/>). Made with QGIS 4.14.4. Map design by Kaitlin Dailey on August 7, 2016.

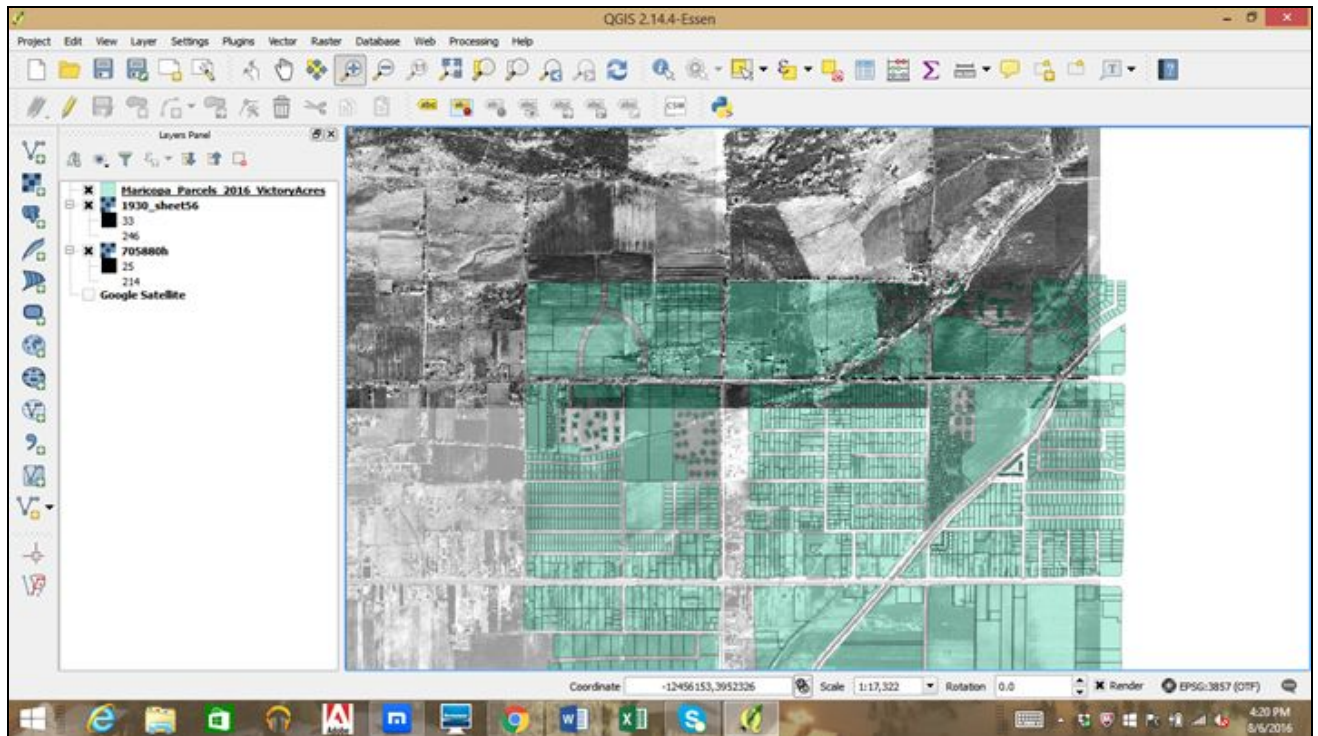


Fig. 3.2 Tempe c. 1930 with section of Victory Acres c. 1949 and parcels 2016
 An aerial map of the area from 1930 includes a small section of Victory Acres, which can be seen in the overlay on the map above. The teal section is provided to show a clear outline of where the section of Victory Acres is located on the darker gray map, which is the 1930 aerial footage. The lighter gray is a more transparent map from 1949 of Victory Acres. The aerial footage shows that the area was mainly unsettled, rural farmland, as most of it still was in the 1949 map. Made with QGIS software 4.14.4, Map designed by Megan Sheehan August 6, 2016.

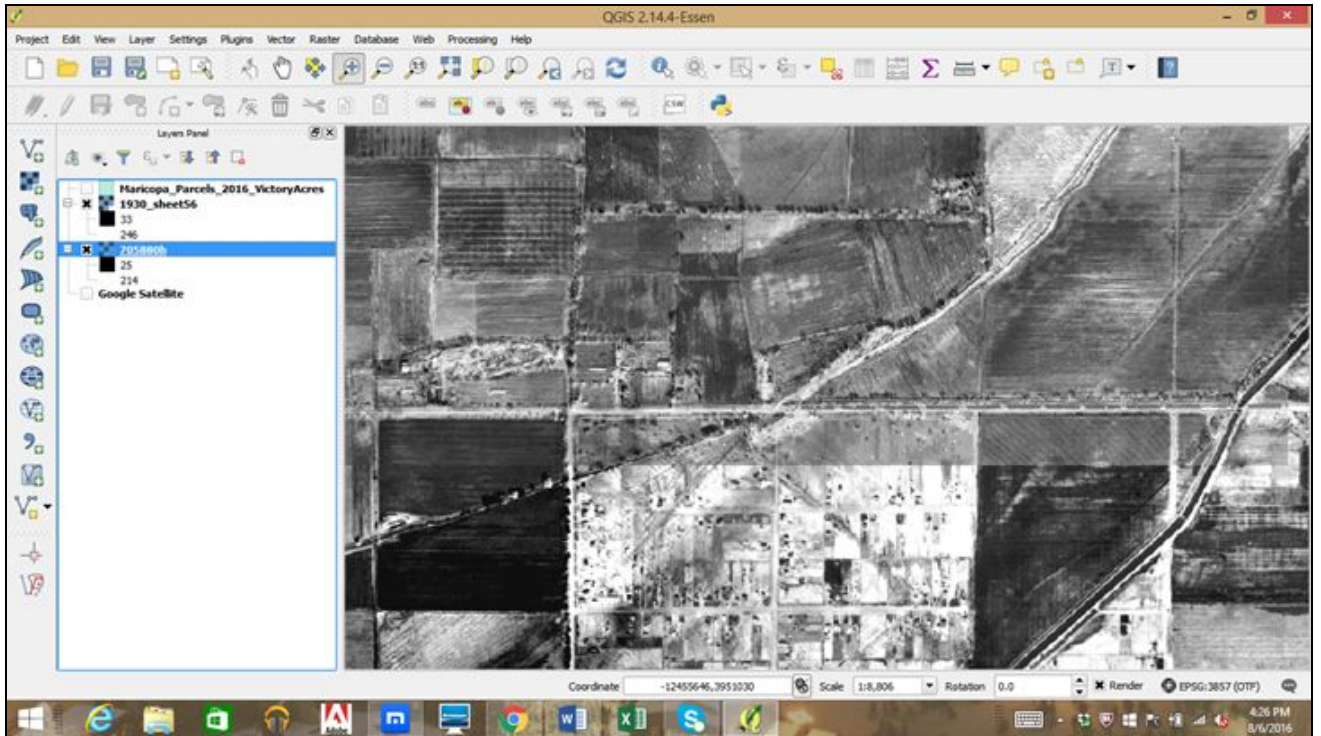


Fig. 3.3 Tempe c. 1930 with section of Victory Acres c. 1949

In a closer look of the section of Victory Acres from the 1930 aerial footage, overlaid with the 1949 aerial map, it is easier to see the development that occurred over nearly two decades. The blue oval is a general outline of where Victory Acres overlaps on the two maps. The few houses that stood in the area in 1930 were still there in 1949, as indicated by the red arrow. There are a few houses that sprung up by 1949, that were not there in 1930—as indicated by the yellow arrow. However, two decades saw very little change in the area. Made with QGIS software 4.14.4, Map designed by Megan Sheehan August 6, 2016.

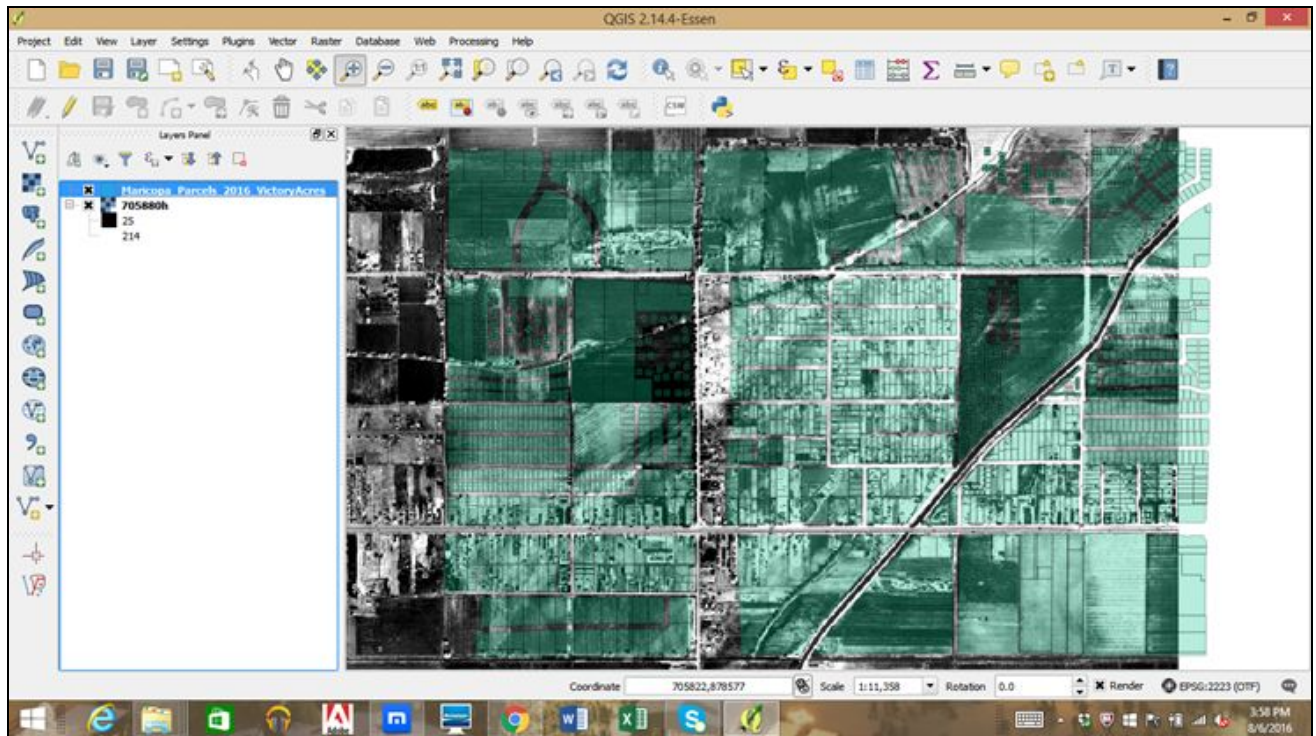


Fig. 3.4 Victory Acres c. 1949 compared to 2016 Parcels

In overlaying the aerial footage of Victory Acres from 1949, with the 2016 parcels shown in teal polygon structure, you can see the changes that have occurred in over half a decade. The land that was once desert or farmland has been populated with buildings—mostly residential, as well as modern roads. Some of the only features of the area that remain are the canals running through the area, more significantly the Tempe Canal that can clearly be seen on both maps (shown by yellow arrows). A few of the original residential buildings from 1949 can still be made out on the map. Made with QGIS software 4.14.4, Map designed by Megan Sheehan August 6, 2016.

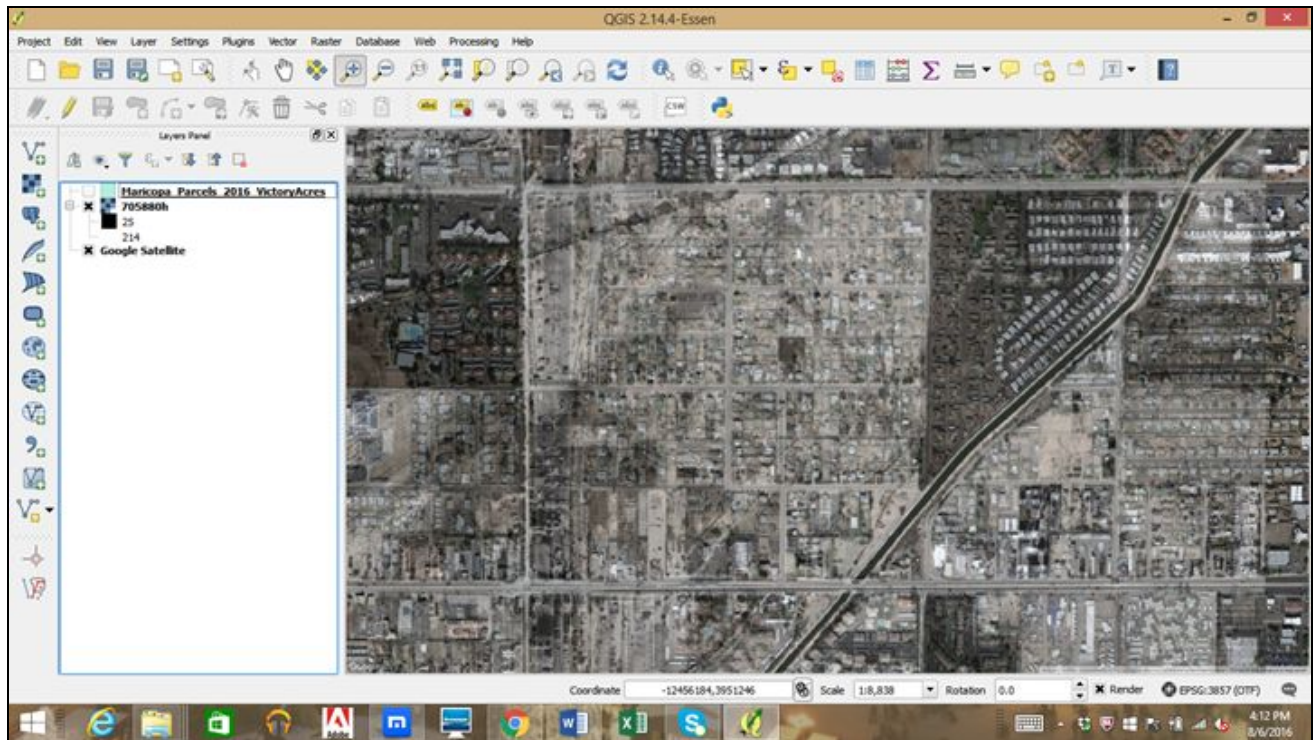


Fig. 3.5 Victory Acres c. 1949 compared to 2016 Google satellite images
 In this screen it is very difficult to see the changes from 1949 compared to the present based on the colorings of the maps. What is most visible in the screenshot is the Google satellite imagery that shows all of the homes that have taken over this area. In the 1949 aerial image of the map there are very few homes, and it is mostly rural farmland. By present-day that farmland has disappeared and residential buildings (with a few commercial buildings) have taken place of it. Made with QGIS software 4.14.4, Map designed by Megan Sheehan August 6, 2016.

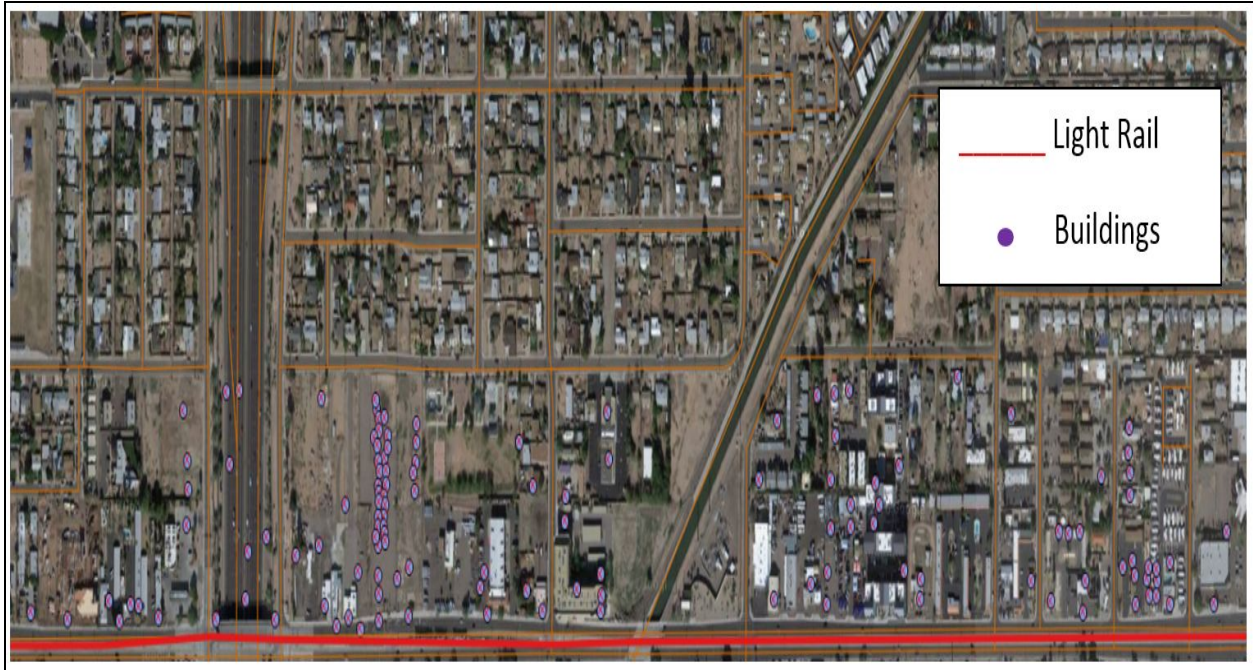


Fig. 3.6 Tempe, 2016 showing section of Victory Acres affected by the construction of light rail on Apache Blvd. An aerial map of Victory Acres from 1959 was used to map the comparison. The 1959 aerial image show large clusters of homes and businesses that were completely wiped out as a result of the construction of the light rail. Sources: Google Earth, Historical Aerials shared by Maricopa County. Made with QGIS software 2.16. Map designed by Zsuzsa Szabo, August 7, 2016.

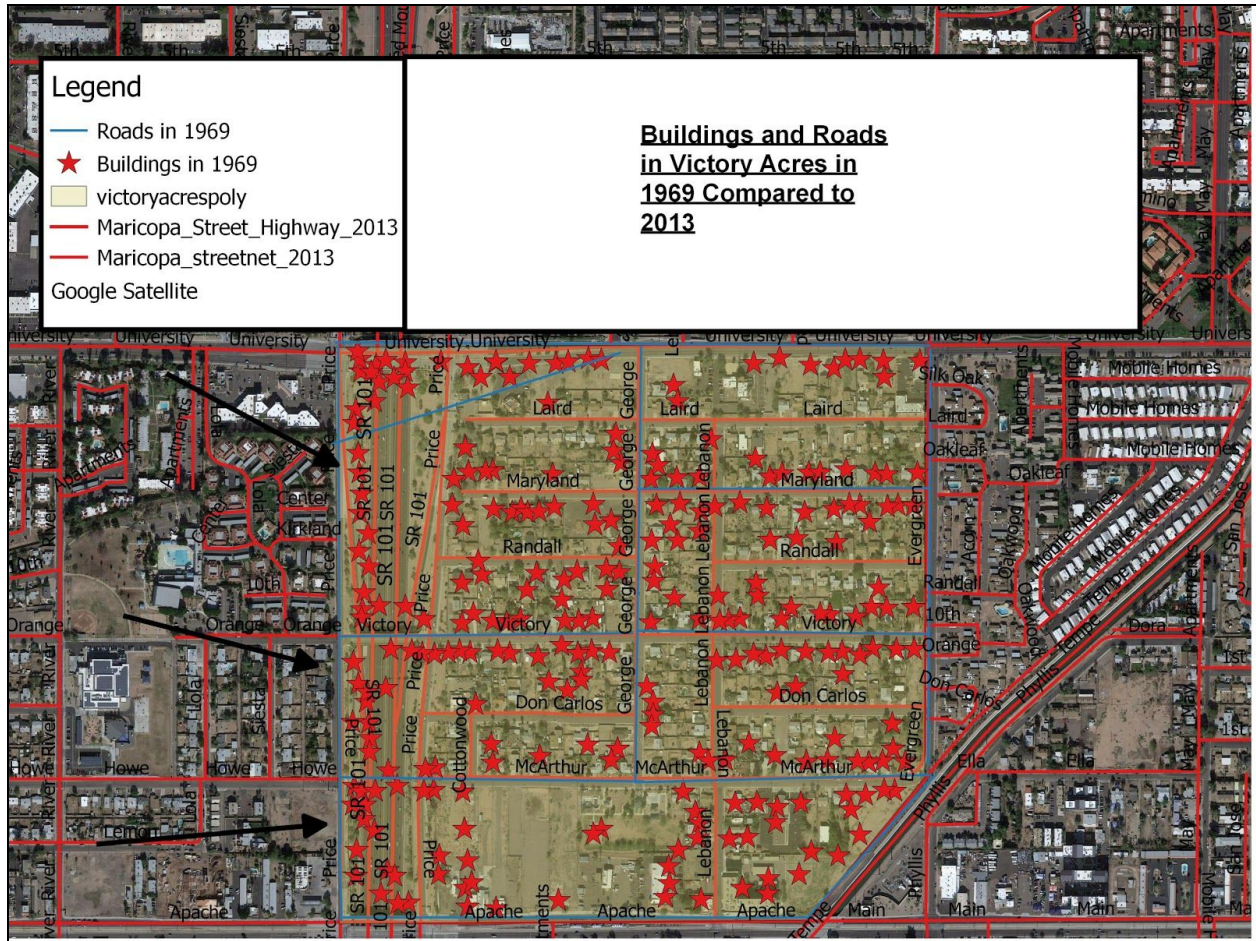


Fig. 3.7 A Google Map Satellite image showing buildings and roads that were present in Victory Acres in 1969. The map shows the impact that SR 101 had on the left-hand side of Victory Acres. All of the buildings were taken out to create the highway. The arrows show how the densely packed area of buildings that were removed. Also, several more streets have been added since 1969. Sources: Google Satellite and Historical Aerials provided by Maricopa County. The GIS was made with QGIS software 2.14.3. Map Design and GIS were designed by Brooks Waybright on August 7th, 2016.



Fig. 3.8 Open Space 1976

An aerial map image showing the open space that was present in 1976. Victory Acres was originally farmland and this map shows what could possibly be plots of farmland, the backyards of residents, or vacant lots. In Figure 3.9 below, it is clear that there is much less open space in recent times. The only open space, for the most part, is in parcel size lots. Sources: Historical Aerials provided by Maricopa County. The GIS was made with QGIS software 2.14.3. Map and QGIS design were made by Jonathan Lipford on August 8, 2016.



Fig. 3.9 Open Space 2013

An aerial map image showing the open space that was present in 2013. Sources: Historical Aerials provided by Maricopa County. The GIS was made with QGIS software 2.14.3. Map and QGIS design were made by Jonathan Lipford on August 8, 2016.



Fig. 3.10 Victory Acres, showing businesses and local amenities, according to type and time period established. For example, the base color of the churches and Esquer Park come from their 'cultural' connections, but the two churches are shaded darker because of their relative age. Note that most of the businesses in the southwest corner of Victory Acres are now gone, with vacant lots and abandoned buildings dominating the area. Source: 2016 Maricopa County aerial maps from 1949, 1959, 1969, 1976, 1979, 1986, 1997, 2000, 2004, and 2009, accessed through Arizona State University Data Repository, as well as 'ground truthing through Google Street View. Made with QGIS 4.14.4 Map design by Kris Fedorak August 10, 2016.



Fig. 3.11 Map showing location of businesses and residences displaced by Price Freeway Construction, circa 1949-1986. Stars indicate structures present in 1949 Aerial photo, triangles indicate structures present in 1969 photo. Made with QGIS software 4.14.4, Map designed by William Hedrick, August 8, 2016.

Endnotes

- [1] Santos C. Vega, *Mexicans in Tempe*, (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009): 6.
- [2] Mike Sakal, "History: All that Remains of Tempe's Lost San Pablo Neighborhood," *East Valley Tribune*, June 4, 2011, Accessed August 4, 2016.
http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/local/article_2367858e-8e3c-11e0-a79c-001cc4c03286.html.
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- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] Ibid.
- [7] Sakal, 2.
- [8] Santos C. Vega and Jean Reynolds, 21.
- [9] William A. Schwab, "Alternative Explanations of Neighborhood Change: An Evolution of Neighborhood Life-Cycle, Composition, and Arbitrage Models," *Sociological Focus* 21, no. 1 (January 1988): 82, accessed August 4, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20831462>
- [10] Ibid, 83.
- [11] Nancy Perry, "Eminent Domain Destroys a Community: Leveling East Arlington to Make Way for the Pentagon," *Urban Geography* 37, no. 1 (December 2015): 145, 157, accessed August 4, 2016, doi: 10.1080/02723638.2015.1100953.
- [12] Ibid, 142.
- [13] Vega, 9.
- [14] Perry, 145.

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